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ABSTRACT

This study of the negative side of children's writing utilized an experimental group and a control group equalized according to sex and the results of the language sub-tests of the Stanford Achievement Tests. Students wrote two 1,000 word composition samples, one during the first month of the study and one during the ninth month. The purposes of the before and after analyses were to determine: (1) whether or not the experimental factor (the teaching of linguistic grammars to the experimental subjects) was effective in increasing the frequency of use of the various combinational verb-phrase options in the writings of the experimental subjects as compared with the written samples of the control subjects, and (2) whether or not boys and girls demonstrated any significant difference in their selection of the various verb-phrase options. Results of these analyses indicate that fifth-grade students show developmental growth in their performance in the use of verb + "be" in subordinate clauses. Growth factors that were significant only for the experimental subjects included the verbal combinations: verb] "be" in the main clause; main verb in the subordinate clauses, verb] modal and Verb] "have" in their subordinate clauses. No significant difference was found in the frequency of verb-phrase options selected by boys and girls of either group in their before and after written samples. This study indicates that growth in elementary children's utilization of verb phrase structures is largely developmental. (Author/CK)

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The Negative "Aspects" of Children's Writing

Historically, in American education, the elementary curriculum has reflected much time and emphasis in the study of English grammar; this is apparent in the term "grammar school." Following both World Wars, the resultant concerns about our educational curricular offerings, which were the outgrowth of observations of data concerning the language abilities of American service personnel, had definitive effects upon the inclusion of grammar in public school education curricula. During the two decades immediately following World War I, there was a renewed attention to the study of the English Language per se and to English grammar specifically.

> World War I had made the nation aware of at least four language problems: (1) the low level of literacy of men called into service, (2) differences in dialect and levels of usage, (3) the need for clear, concise, accurate communication, and (4) the need to use the full power and resources of language in persuasion.[1]

The consequent striving to achieve a "functional" error-free English provided the impetus for such scholarly, scientific investigations of American English as those which resulted in the grammars written by Otto Jespersen and Janet Rankin Aiken.

The concerns for educational innovations following World War II were divergent from curricular efforts following the first war and temporarily halted an emphasis upon grammar. Instead, the English curricular efforts were directed toward alleviating the sociological and psychological problems of American youth; therefore, the decades of the forties and fifties incorporated experimental "core" programs which integrated literature, social studies, and general psychology to solve problem-based methodological approaches to a "common-learnings" effort. The intensive reading of literature

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[1]William H. Evans and Jerry L. Walker, New Trends in the Teaching of English in Secondary Schools, edited by John U. Michaelis (Chicago, Ill.: Rand McNally & Company, 1966), p. 14.

(especially the study of the "great books" classics) was considered a more effective way to meet the needs of America's youth than was the study of grammar.[2]

Henry Meckel, responded to Robert Pooley's observation that teachers continued to include grammar in their programs during this period because they assumed that teaching grammar and usage was an important phase of improving composition. Meckel reported that the results of research studies conducted during the first fifty years of the present century overwhelmingly refuted educators' continued faith in the inclusion of grammar in language arts curricula; the majority of these studies indicated that the instruction of grammar had little effect upon the written language skills of pupils.[3]

During the sixties and seventies, however, we have witnessed a renewed belief in the effects of grammar teaching observable in the intrusion and rapid development of the use of linguistic grammars in the elementary textbooks, teaching materials, and in the content of college courses for teacher training.

Previous Research

A Recent report of research by ERIC in Elementary English[4] indicates current positive results in research projects. The concomitant optimism (that increased knowledge about how our language is structured, when coupled with improvements in the inductive methodologies of teaching observable linguistic data) has lead many present-day educators and scholars to believe

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[2]Evans and Walker, p.19.

[3]Henry C. Meckel, "Research on Teaching Composition and Literature," in Handbook of Research on Teaching, ed. H. L. Gage (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963), p. 974.

[4]Robert V. Denby, "Linguistics Instruction in Elementary School Classrooms," Elementary English, January, 1969, XLVI, p. 30.

that there is a challenge in studying the English language that has validity in and of itself as a discipline, and that this knowledge can also provide functional implications for language-centered language arts experiences within the elementary school.

Longitudinal studies of children's language performances, both written and oral forms, such as those conducted by Walter Loban (1963) and Ruth Strickland (1962), as well as status studies, such as those conducted by Hunt (1964), O'Donnell et al (1967), Zidonis/Bateman (1964), and Gale (1967), have reported that linguistic analyses of children's language patterns and concomitant evaluation of the maturity of their language structures should no longer be determined by the standard procedures of earlier studies--mean sentence length, mean clause length, and subordination ratios--but rather by an examination of the subject's actual language structures based on the numbers and quality of transformations employed by the children in producing these linguistic utterances.[5]

The linguists who adhere to generative-transformational grammatical theories contend that native speakers of English have the competence to utilize all of the linguistic structures of their language, but that environmental and experiential variables result in observable differences in the levels of children's performances in utilizing their language in written and oral communication. Walen, in his recent research to clarify the relationship between a pupil's knowledge of grammar and his ability in composition concluded:

> Knowledge of grammar as measured by the California Language Test was an important predictor of composition skill. More importantly still, the study has indicated a canonical correlation of .91 between total language knowledge and ability to write technically competent English compositions .

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[5]For full data concerning these studies consult the bibliography provided for this article.

> I believe this study has shown conclusively that there is a strong, positive relationship between the components of total English instruction--grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation and spelling--and how well students perform in written composition . . . . and it seems to indicate that we may set aside some doubts we have had concerning the value of conventional language instruction.[6]

Because these recent studies have indicated that the greatest growth in written usage appears to occur in elementary children's use of nomalization transformations, the positive results reported hinged upon this area of linguistic performance of young children. These researchers in their conclusions and in their implications for further research, tended to note less spectacular gains in the children's use of verb forms. Kellogg Hunt's summary statement of his research is representative of the general findings:

> In summary, then, the auxiliary becomes more complex with successively older grades with (1) an increase in the frequency of modals, (2) an increase in the frequency of perfect tense forms, and (3) an increase in the frequency of passives . . . . The progressive forms maintain a constant frequency in fourth and eighth grades, and then drop sharply in the twelfth grade.[7]

Interestingly, the research findings of the sixties and seventies have tended to contradict a widely held misconception that girls are more linguistically favored than boys. In the general population, there seemed to be no statistically significant differences between boys and girls, and if such differences did occur, as reported by Riling (1965) and Loban (1963), these were at the polar ends of the distribution with indications that high boys do better than high girls, but that low boys are at the bottom of the heap.(See footnote 5.)

Dialectal studies, particularly of language patterns exhibited by Negro speakers of English, as reported by Robbins Burling and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., have indicated that there seems to be a cultural factor that

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[6]Thomas E. Walen, "Total English Equals Writing Competence," Research in the Teaching of English. Spring, 1969, Vol. 3, No. 1, NCTE, p. 61.
[7]Kellogg W. Hunt, Differences in Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1964).

influences the verb patterns of Negro dialect in contradistinction to standard white English dialectal patterns. These processes are reflected in the use of be to distinguish between momentary and habitual action as in the contrast between he busy, which means "he is busy at the moment," and he be busy which means "he is habitually busy."[8] Other tenses not found in standard dialects either reflect additions to the verb structures that create co-occurance errors, such as it don't all be her fault, he done told me, I been seen it or I ain't like it. On the other hand, there are omissions of inflected forms that differ from standard English patterns, as reflected in such statements as I burn a hole in my pants yesterday, he do good in school; or the omission of the auxiliaries be and have as in they ready, he a good boy, he been drinking.[9]

There has been a paucity of research, however, with a major purpose of studying the options that elementary-age children employ (from those that are available by standard English structures) in their written and oral linguistic compositions. A recent doctoral dissertation by John R. Muma at the University of Georgia in Athens, 1967, studied the aspect of verb phrases of children who ranged from age four through age eleven. Written language samples were produced only by the age group eight through eleven. The limitations of this study were the small sample and the fact that the subjects represented a range from gifted, through normal, to retarded children. Muma's results indicated no basic differences in oral or written forms. The greatest differences occurred between the written samples of the superior group and those of the retarded subjects.

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[8]Cited examples were taken from Robbins Burling, Man's Many Voices (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1970), p. 130.

[9]Cited examples were taken from Raven I. McDavid, "A Checklist of Significant Features for Discriminating Social Dialects," in Dimensions of Dialect, edited by Eldonna L. Evertts (Champaign, Illinois: NCTE, 1967), pp. 9-10.

The indications were that aspect seems to develop later than tense or simple modals, and when used, progressive and perfect aspects are used most frequently, with a slightly higher frequency indicated in usage of the progressive form.[10]

Purpose of the Study

The present study, therefore, was conducted to examine in depth the performance of a group of fifth grade subjects in written composition utilizing a three-way factorial design (2 X 2 X 2). The variables were experimental versus control subjects, boys versus girls, and before and after performance.

On the basis of previous research, we accepted the null hypothesis that there would be no significant gains in the subjects' selection of combinational options in the use of modals and aspects in verb phrases either among or between the groups. We believed, however, that all subjects would employ with a greater frequency the options *have* and *be* as modals than they would utilize these specific options to formulate aspect.

Description of the Subjects

All subjects in this investigation were fifth grade pupils enrolled in the same school, located in a high middle-class socioeconomic residential area of Muncie, Indiana. The experimental and control groups each consisted of sixteen boys and sixteen girls, totalling sixty-four subjects whose before and after written linguistic outputs were processed.

The groups were equalized by the distribution of their verbal scores on the *Stanford Achievement Test, Form M*. A statistical F test (a variance

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[10] John R. Muma, "Frequency of Aspect in Oral and Written Verbal Samples by Children," ERIC, *Research in Education*, May, 1968, Vol. 3, No. 5.

ratio of the squares of standard deviations) was run to satisfy the condition that the sampling was that which could have arisen by random sampling from the same population.

The school attended by the subjects is located in a university town and is situated ten blocks from the campus. The parent population would be classified as white, upper-middle class socioeconomic status, with most of them being college-trained professional and managerial personnel. All of the subjects represented a homogenious stratification with relationship to their home--language background, socioeconomic status, race, and intelligence. The intelligence test scores, as measured by Lorge-Thorndike Tests, Level B, Form 1, indicated the range in verbal I.Q. scores for the experimental group (boys 86-135; girls 90-146) and for the control group (boys 77-125; girls 91-133). F scores for variance were less than either the .01 or the .05 levels of confidence, indicating no significant differences between the two groups relevant to verbal intelligence as measured by this test.

Age ranges within the groups were almost identical, which reflected the promotional policies of the school. The mean age for experimental group was boys 10.6, girls 10.4 and for control group boys 10.5 and girls 10.7. Thus the groups were comparable in the factors of race, socioeconomic background, native lingual dialectal patterns, age, verbal intelligence achievement scores in language arts, and were equalized in numbers of subjects by sex. Since these variables were either controlled by formulation of the groups or established by statistical analysis, the difference in the findings should reflect the experimental factor, that a group was taught linguistic grammars and the control group was taught traditional grammar.

Prodedures of the Study

The experimental procedures were in operation for one academic year of nine months. The language samples, on which this study is based, consisted of a 1000-word student corpus for each phase of the study, initial and terminal. No attempt was made to have the subjects of the two groups write about identical topics, although the teachers conferred about the writing assignments. They agreed to incorporate the following controlling factors for the pupils' writing samples:

1. Each student wrote more than a thousand words. The analyzed sample consisted of an accurate count of a thousand words, after the deletion of word-tangles (called "garbles" or "mazes"). Thus the prose analyzed for each child comprised 2,000 words, resulting in a total sample of 128,000 words.
2. All writing was done under the supervision of the teacher in the classroom to eliminate contamination from any outside assistance.
3. The teachers urged each student to proof-read his own work carefully before submitting it as no changes were made in the samples after they were handed in. The teachers made no corrections. The writing samples of each child were typed, with ne correction in spelling or punctuation. Double spaced duplicate copies were made to facilitate analysis of the data and for cross-checking purposes.
4. The content of the written compositions was to concern subject matter typical of the writing required in the pursuit of the various subject areas--social studies, science, and language arts. No writing was to include reports based upon encyclopedic or source-book references. The teachers tried to avoid narrative compositions

which included quoted dialogue of characters, as this would result in an overabundance of transformations classified as noun replacements. Efforts were made to distribute the writing between exposition and descriptive writings. The purpose was to secure a cross section of what the students *did* write freely rather than to structure situations to maximize what they *could* write--the linguistic distinction between *performance* and *competence*.

Analysis of the Language Samples

Each pre- and post- written language sample, composed of 1,000 words each for every subject, was segmented into T-Units, as Kellogg Hunt's research had indicated that this is a "more valid index of maturity in writing . . . at least in the early grades . . .than is (a) sentence length, or (b) clause length, or (c) the subordination ratio."[11]

Hunt's definition of a T-Unit (minimal terminable unit) which was utilized in this study is "the shortest segment it would be grammatically allowable to write with a capital letter at one end and a period or question mark at the other, leaving no fragment as residue."[12]

Therefore, each T-Unit contains one main clause, which might or might not have a noun clause, adjective or adverbial clause embedded within it. Two main clauses are segmented as two T-Units; the coordinator becomes the initial word of the second T-Unit, a grammatical practice which twentieth-century writers follow. Each T-Unit is a minature sentence. If the T-Unit contains only one clause, it would be traditionally classified as a simple sentence. If, however, the T-Unit contains more than one clause, it would

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[11]Kellogg W. Hunt, *Differences in Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels* (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1964), p. 50.
[12]Hunt, p. 27.

be similar to a traditionally-labeled complex sentence. This technique does not permit compound sentences, but there might be co-ordinators connecting words, phrases, or subordinate clauses.

Because the number of T-Units decreased from the pre- samples to the post- samples and varied considerably among the subjects, we believed that the first fifty T-Units produced by each of the sixty-four subjects were a representative sample of what the subjects did produce. We further believed that the verb phrases of subordinate clauses should be analyzed in the study, so that a more complete view of the subjects' performance in their use of modal and aspect could be assessed.

Main verbs, modal, aspect and all verb phrases in subordinate clauses within the first fifty T-Units of the before and after written samples were analyzed. The analysis included a frequency count of combinational verbal choices and the interaction between and among the experimental/control, boy/girl, and before/after factors.

Analysis of the Findings

In order to quantify the frequencies of the combinations of the various options utilized by the subjects in forming verb phrases, the data were tabulated for each subject for his before and after written samples. The data were also computed for an analysis of variance, three-way factorial (2 X 2 X 2), for each of the eight combinations listed in Table I, for the before/after, experimental/control, and boy/girl factors. The findings occur in the following tabular forms:

Table I

Analysis of Verb Form Options Utilized in the Before and After Samples of the Experimental and the Control Groups

Verb Form Combinations Selected	Experimental Class Before						Control Class Before					
	Main Clause			Subordinate Clause			Main Clause			Subordinate Clause		
	Boy	Girl	All	Boy	Girl	All	Boy	Girl	All	Boy	Girl	All
1. Main Verb	631	649	1280	189	130	319	614	612	1226	167	168	335
2. Verb + Modal	104	72	176	41	30	71	134	145	279	47	57	104
3. Verb + Have	14	9	23	3	4	7	21	0	21	3	4	7
4. Verb + Be	38	58	96	12	10	22	30	28	58	10	14	24
5. Verb + Modal + Have + Be	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Verb + Modal + Have	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
7. Verb + Modal + Be	7	7	14	1	2	3	0	2	2	1	0	1
8. Verb + Have + Be	5	5	10	0	1	1	1	2	3	2	0	2

Verb Form Combinations Selected	Experimental Class After						Control Class After					
	Main Clause			Subordinate Clause			Main Clause			Subordinate Clause		
	Boy	Girl	All	Boy	Girl	All	Boy	Girl	All	Boy	Girl	All
1. Main Verb	597	572	1169	321	363	684	604	597	1201	260	197	457
2. Verb + Modal	120	139	259	82	101	183	135	138	273	59	54	113
3. Verb + Have	20	17	37	32	30	62	16	25	41	7	7	14
4. Verb + Be	50	59	109	35	50	85	43	25	68	17	22	39
5. Verb + Modal + Have + Be	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Verb + Modal + Have	0	2	2	2	6	8	0	3	3	0	1	1
7. Verb + Modal + Be	9	10	19	4	3	7	5	8	13	2	1	3
8. Verb + Have + Be	3	1	4	0	3	3	2	4	6	0	2	2

The findings tended to prove the null hypothesis that we began with. Of the sixteen Main Verb and optional combinations analyzed, only five showed significant statistical differences. Of these five items which were significant at .01 or .05, only one occurred in the main clause, that was VB plus be which was significant at the .01 level for the experimental/control factor. The other four items, i.e., combinational options used in subordinate clauses, showed the following significance:

VB form for before/after at the .01 level

VB form for experimental/control and before/after at .05 level

There was a trend toward a significant difference between the experiemntal/control group in the main verbs of subordinate clauses

VB + modal for before/after at .01 level

VB + modal for experimental/control and before/after at .05 level

VB + have for experimental/control at .01 level

VB + have for before/after at .01 level

VB + have experimental/control and before/after at .01 level

VB + be for before/after at .01 level

There was a trend toward a significant difference between the experimental/control group in the use of verb + be in subordinate clauses.

A statistical summary is provided only for those items which showed a significant difference.

Table II

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Verb Form Combination	Source	M.S.	D.F.	F-Ratio	
ITEM #4- Main Clause	A	48.758	1.	12.0189	**
	B	0.633	1.	0.1560	
	C	4.133	1.	1.0187	
	AB	18.758	1.	4.6238	
	AC	0.070	1.	0.0173	
	BC	5.695	1.	1.4039	
	ABC	0.195	1.	0.0481	
ITEM #1- Subordinate Clause	A	347.820	1.	7.9096	+
	B	48.758	1.	1.1088	
	C	1852.883	1.	42.1354	**
	AB	15.820	1.	0.3598	
	AC	461.320	1.	10.4906	*
	BC	10.695	1.	0.2432	
	ABC	212.695	1.	4.8368	
ITEM #2- Subordinate Clause	A	10.695	1.	1.3698	
	B	1.320	1.	0.1691	
	C	114.383	1.	14.6498	**
	AB	0.070	1.	0.0090	
	AC	82.883	1.	10.6154	*
	BC	1.758	1.	0.2251	
	ABC	15.820	1.	2.0262	
ITEM #3- Subordinate Clause	A	18.000	1.	14.5455	**
	B	0.000	1.	0.0000	
	C	30.031	1.	24.2677	**
	AB	0.031	1.	0.0253	
	AC	18.000	1.	14.5455	**
	BC	0.125	1.	0.1010	
	ABC	0.031	1.	0.0253	
ITEM #4- Subordinate Clause	A	15.125	1.	5.5483	+
	B	3.781	1.	1.3871	
	C	47.531	1.	17.4360	**
	AB	0.125	1.	0.0459	
	AC	18.000	1.	6.6030	+
	BC	2.531	1.	0.9285	
	ABC	2.000	1.	0.7337	

A. experimental/control factor
B. boy/girl factor
C. before/after factor

** Significant at .01 level
* Significant at .05 level
+ Tendency toward significance

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study has been threefold. An attempt has been made to assess the effect that the teaching of linguistic grammars to fifth grade subjects may have upon their written compositions in relationship to those of children taught traditional grammar, with relevance to their performance utilizing the varied combinational choices of the modal and the aspect of verb phrases. The experimental design of our study was such that the before and after sampling could determine which items might be accounted for by developmental growth and which might be attributed to the experimental differential--the grammar of the material presented. Finally, we hoped to determine whether or not there was a significant differential between the performance of the boys and the girls both between and among the groups. The statistical data of significance at either the .01 or .05 levels of reliability for the findings, plus certain indications of possible trends, have lead us to make the following conclusions:

1. The results of the study of verb forms, which indicated that the major significance occurred in the subordinate clause constructions, seems to indicate that there is a positive relationship between the elementary child's growth in the use of embedding transformations and the growth in frequency of choices in the combinational choices of the modals and aspect within verb phrases. We feel that this differential reflects the fact that the subjects of the experimental group were taught these transformations at a conscious level. As their numbers of T-Units decreased, indicating a concomitant increase in subordinate clauses, this factor appears to be attributable to the teaching differential rahter than to developmental growth.
2. In agreement with previous studies, the main verbs of the original clauses seemed to indicate a growth factor for both groups in the

utilization of have and be as modals. Because only one item was significant in the main verb options (Item #4) at .01 level, we feel that this must be attributed to developmental growth rather than to the experimental factor of linguistic grammar.

3. Because there was minimal or no growth in the use of modals plus aspect combinations (Items #5 through #8) in either the main or subordinate clauses, we must conclude that either aspect is a concept that is too difficult for fifth graders to master at this developmental stage or that the teaching of transformational grammar adopted for this study did not specifically teach the variations in the use of modals and aspect in the formulation of verb forms. Re-examination of the transforms studied by the children for verbs revealed that the performance level required emphasized the use of infinitival combinations--concatinative verb combinations rather than specific use of modals and aspect. The statistical data of this study made no allowance for judging concatinative-verb usage growth. (Such as: I asked him to start thinking of leaving; I started to ask him to leave; or I began wanting to find him leaving.)

These conclusions have led us to draw the following implications for elementary teachers, curriculum directors, and college teacher-training institutions:

1. Because we accept the theory of native competence and the fact that environmental experiences can increase the potential of children's linguistic outputs, we agree with Lester Golub that the results of the present data (combined with results from his and previous studies) would indicate "where the emphasis on grammar study might be placed when taught concurrently with oral and written discourse. By showing what

students already use and know and by emphasizing those linguistic strcutures for which the students have a potential or which they use not at all, the elementary teacher can economize and focus class time."[13]

2. The foregoing implication means that elementary teachers must themselves be aware of the possible performance combinations. This in turn implies that teacher-training courses should include courses in history of the English language and in linguistic grammars that emphasize the structures and the transformations of the children's potential linguistic utterances.

3. It therefore follows that teaching materials and elementary textbooks must be based upon knowledge of the competence and the performance levels of children and provide a variety of materials geared to this elementary level. Such media should permit the utilization of inductive as well as deductive methods of instruction. The teaching procedures should allow many opportunities for oral and written pattern practice of all verb-phrase combinations.

4. The study seems to indicate that there is a positive correlation between the components of English instruction (including grammar) and between performance; moreover, that one area of study may result in concomitant growth levels in other areas. (For example, in the present study, the teaching of embedded transformations resulting in subordinate clauses allowed the children to make concomitant growth in the use of verb forms. Growth in the first performance level seemed to encourage the children to utilize their language competence in the latter at a higher level of performance, although this factor was not consciously taught.)

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[13]Lester S. Golub, "Linguistic Structures in Students' Oral and Written Discourse," Research in Teaching of English, Spring, 1969, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 70-85.

We believe that the child will learn even more effectively performance potentials which are taught consciously, if the material is presented at the elementary child's understanding level, if the child has insight into the concepts and structures required of him, and if he has the opportunity to utilize the new structures in his own oral and written communication needs.

5. As a result of our work with elementary children in teaching this material and in preparing a linguistic television tape, we have come to believe that the study of grammar (if taught by a knowledgeable teacher who utilizes inductive methodology, capitalizes on the child's innate competence, and permits original usage in natural daily performance rather than repetitive, formal workbook-type drill, so that the child is consciously aware of his obligatory and his optional cheices in English language structures) will result in a higher level of written performance than if the learning is left to pure developmental growth. We do not advocate, however, the forcing of elementary children's concepts and structures that seem to be above developmental range. To this effect, we believe further research is needed to determine whether or not aspect is within the elementary grade-level range if consciously taught, and we further recommend that the matter of concatination be explored in an experimental setting.

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Abstract:

The Negative "Aspects" of Children's Writing

An experimental group and a control group were composed of thirty-two fifth-grade students equalized according to sex and the results of the language sub-tests of the Stanford Achievement Test. Students wrote two 1,000 word composition samples, one during the first month of the study and one during the ninth month; of these, the first fifty T-units of each sample were analyzed to determine children's performance in the use of modals and aspect in eight possible combinational options in writing verb phrases for the main clause and the subordinate clauses appearing in each T-unit. The purposes of the before and after analyses were to determine: (1) whether or not the experimental factor (the teaching of linguistic grammars to the experimental subjects) was effective in increasing the frequency of use of the various combinational verb-phrase options in the writings of the experimental subjects as compared with the written samples of the control subjects, and (2) whether or not boys and girls demonstrated any significant difference in their selection of the various verb-phrase options.

Results of these analyses indicate that fifth-grade students show developmental growth in their performance in the use of verb + be in subordinate clauses. Growth factors that were significant only for the experimental subjects included the verbal combinations: verb + be in the main clause; main verb in the subordinate clauses (which reflected the fact that the experimental group utilized more subordinate clauses as a result of their instruction in transformational-generative grammar; verb + modal and verb + have in their subordinate clauses. No significant difference was indicated in the frequency of verb-phrase options selected by boys and girls of either group in their before and after written samples.

This study confirms the findings of previous research concerned with children's acquisition of language patterns; indications are that growth in elementary children's utilization of verb phrase structures is largely developmental with minimal or no growth occurring in their selection of

aspect in their writing. However, instruction in transformational-generative grammar can be contributory toward improving the awareness of the wide range of possibilities available to children in verb-phrase combinations with a concomitant increase in their frequency of utilizing these options. (Authors)